

Legal Blood Alcohol Level (Effects of Maine's .05% Limit)

Brief Program Description

The objective of this study was to determine whether a Maine law lowering the legal blood alcohol limit (BAL) from 0.10 percent to 0.05 percent for people already convicted of driving while intoxicated (DWI) reduced this group's involvement in fatal vehicle crashes.

Researchers collected and analyzed data on fatal crashes involving drivers with prior DWI convictions for 6-year periods before and after enactment of the lower BAL law, comparing Maine and the other five New England States pre- to post-law, in terms of changes in the proportions of:

- Fatal crashes involving drivers with recorded prior DWI convictions
- Fatal crashes involving drivers with recorded prior DWI convictions and illegally elevated BALs
- Alcohol-involved and non-alcohol-involved fatal crashes involving drivers with recorded prior DWI convictions

Study results showed dramatic adjusted percentage declines—48 percent and 51 percent, respectively—in fatal crashes involving Maine drivers with prior DWI convictions and those with DWI convictions and illegally elevated BALs, compared to the other New England States. Maine also experience a moderate decline in the proportion of nonalcohol-involved fatal crashes while throughout the rest of New England, these crashes increased 60 percent.

Program Development Support

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